

THE
**Final
Straw**
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

You can send us letters at:
The Final Straw Radio
PO Box 6004
Asheville, NC 28816
USA

Email us at:
thefinalstrawradio@riseup.net
or **thefinalstrawradio@protonmail.com**

To hear our past shows for free, visit:
<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org>

To support transcription and zine-making efforts which are funded by donations, visit:

<https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/donate/>

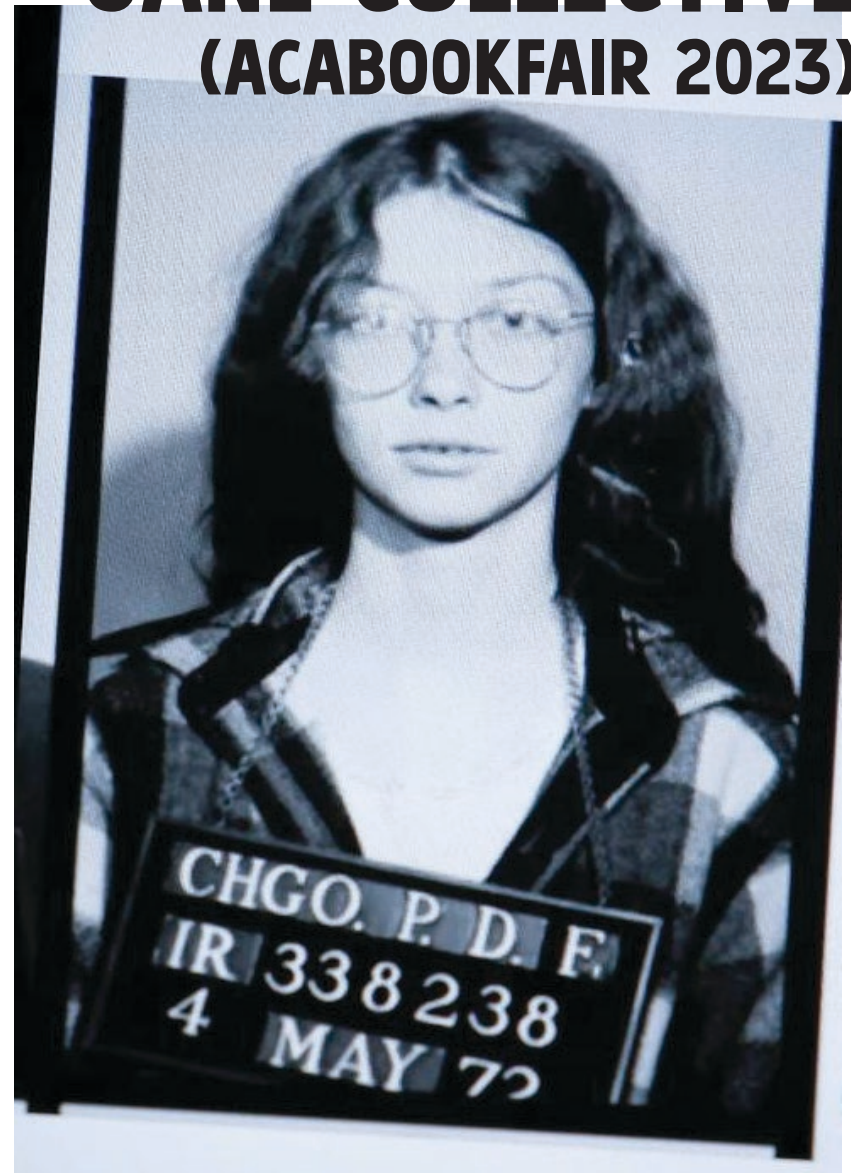
or via Patreon:

<https://www.patreon.com/tfsr>

or via LiberaPay, which does not take a cut of the payments:

<https://liberapay.com/The-Final-Straw-Radio/>

DIANE STEVENS OF JANE COLLECTIVE (ACABOOKFAIR 2023)



THE FINAL STRAW RADIO - SEPT 03, 2023

Audience Question: Hi, we've met I'm a big fan. Thank you for coming to the talk earlier. I just want to say that Jane was a huge inspiration for me and for the work that I do in other parts of the world. And because there's a lot of people here who are probably working on the subject, and I know that it's a moment where it doesn't feel like there's a lot of hope, or where there's a lot of victories being won, I just want to reiterate something that I said earlier: This country is part of a giant landmass called the Americas. Latin America is so lit right now. We are winning victories all over. We're doing direct action. We are a model that can maybe be replicated, or at least an inspiration. I got inspiration from Jane. That's what's cool about this intergenerational format and these talks that are happening. We're just going to keep inspiring ourselves. Let's just keep remembering that there's so much more happening outside of the fake borders of this empire. So thank you for being here. Thank you for doing what you do. You are not alone. There's so many people doing this work.

Diane Stevens: Thank you. So if anybody wants a little takeaway here, a little souvenir, I have some pamphlets. Unfortunately... This is one of the things we used to do at our meetings, fold pamphlets. So some of them are folded, and some aren't. But anyway, this is the pamphlet we used to give people that were coming in for their abortion. I think it's kind of cool. So anyway, if anybody wants one.

So my friend from Charlotte, Carole, made these buttons for a showing of the movie, and it's a picture of my mug shot. So if anybody wants one, they're pretty hysterical. You're welcome to take one. And thank you so much for listening to my story. Thank you.

This week on TFSR, a presentation by Diane Stevens, a member of the Jane Collective in Chicago in the 1960's. This presentation was recorded at the 2023 Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair in so-called Asheville, NC.

Search for this interview title at <https://thefinalstrawradio.noblogs.org/> to find links to further resources on this topic, featured music, the audio version, and files for printing copies of this episode.

TFSR: The following is a presentation recorded on Friday August 11, 2023 at the forth Another Carolina Anarchist Bookfair in so-called Asheville, North Carolina. More recordings can be found at ACABookfair.noblogs.org. The abortion counseling service now better known as Jane started out as a referral service in Chicago in the late 1960s, providing counseling and support to women before and after their procedures. Members of the group learned to do the abortions and then were able to do the procedures for whatever the women could afford to pay.

It's been over a year since the Supreme Court overrode *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs* decision, but it's well known that access to safe and legal abortions was being whittled away where it was available in the so-called USA for a very long time. The struggle against patriarchy and for collective individual autonomy is a constant one with setbacks and successes. At times like these, the importance of being able to learn from struggles of the past becomes all the more pertinent, and this is one such opportunity. We're very lucky to have folks who've been in struggle for a long time in our midst.

Another Carolina Anarchists Bookfair is very excited to present Diane Stevens. From her bio available at our website: Diane Stevens was born in Chicago. She went to school in the suburbs before moving back to the city where she joined the abortion counseling service. Following the *Roe v. Wade* decision and dismissal of all criminal charges, Diane went on to have a career in healthcare, and worked as a nurse practitioner in a variety of settings. Her work for Reproductive Justice has resumed with joining Reproductive Rights Coalition in Charlotte and being a clinic escort. Diane was featured in a recent HBO documentary called *The Janes* which has been nominated for multiple awards, about their time assisting people with uteri with ending their pregnancies. Thank you so much for joining us, Diane.

Seven women were arrested and charged with the felonies of abortion and conspiracy to commit abortion. These charges were ultimately dismissed. It is estimated that about 11,000 abortions were performed before the group disbanded in 1973.

Diane Stevens: I'm just so honored to be here and that I was invited to come here, and I'm so honored to be here and talk to you. So first, let me ask: how many people... Do you mostly know the story about Jane? Do people mostly know what the story is? [Crowd Cheers] Yes? Yeah. Kind of kind of. Okay. Have people mostly seen the movie, the HBO movie? No? Okay. Well, I don't make any money off the movie or anything, but I think it'd be great if you watched it

Audience Question: Hi, how are you? Thank you so much for being here. Before I ask my question, when someone asked if you had any words of hope, somebody said this, it might be from Harry Potter. I'm sure we have some Harry Potter lovers here. I'll quote it. There's some quote like, "As long as there are good people in the world evil will have something to fight against." I just feel so inspired that there are so many amazing people here fighting the good fight. As long as people are doing that we're going in the right direction.

My question is, I used to work as a sex educator in South America and it's something that I feel super passionate about. I think it's very important to create a more equitable world. If we aren't fully empowered in our bodies, then how can we have an equal experience in our life? But something that I always came up against was the question of how do I talk about sex and reproduction and abortion in a way that is appropriate for all ages and that will be heard where even parents that are open will be okay with. I wondered if you had any thoughts about speaking about abortion to younger populations, how to talk about it in an open non-judgmental way that isn't necessarily preaching one side or another, but that is helping to maintain an open mind?

Diane Stevens: Well, maybe there's somebody in this room that could answer that question better than I could. I'm just thinking, you really just have to meet people where they are. And that includes children, and sometimes we try to answer questions that the kids don't even have yet. But maybe somebody in this room could answer that question better than I could.

Audience Question: Few months ago, a seven year old asked me about the pro-abortion sticker on my water bottle. I said abortion is a human right and they asked me, "But what is an abortion?" I told them when somebody is pregnant and they no longer wish to be pregnant. That's the procedure that's performed in order to terminate the pregnancy. Like two or three pretzels later, I'm asked, "So does that kill the baby?" I told them, that depends on what your thoughts on a baby are or what killing is and like another three or four more pretzels later, they said, "Okay, cool!" I think that the importance is that you don't shy away from speaking truth to power. If there's any time where it seems like maybe this is something that would be hard, fucking say it.

Diane Stevens: No, no, that's good. Thank you. Thank you.

no idea who you were. So this is very cool. Very special. I was just wondering what the significance of the name is Jane?

Diane Stevens: None, none. It was Eleanor! You've got to watch the movie because all these questions are answered. Eleanor says, "We can put the machine in my house, but I don't want it to say, 'This is the Oliver house.' Let's just say Jane. This is Jane. Nobody uses that name Jane anymore." The other thing Elena says is... I've seen this movie so many times because I watch it before a talk. She says, "If you worried about every little thing, you'd never get anything done. You'd never get anything done." That's what she says. So yeah, no significance.

Audience Question: Thank you so much for this talk. It's really amazing to be able to hear from you and in person. I was teaching classes on abortion to students and showing the movie and teaching them about the Jane Collective. I'm thinking about... In the ways that the people in the collective talked about the ending of the collective when Roe was decided, and today learning from the failures of the attempt to defend the rights for abortion against the state, it was like 50 years of a sort of slow battle that didn't go very well. Right now we're facing, not only the overturning of Roe v. Wade, but also the attack on trans people's access to care. I think there's a lot of parallels there. I look the Jane Collective to see that this is something that shows us that we don't want to rely on the state, and we don't need to rely on the institutional practices of care giving. I'm wondering what your thoughts are, in terms of looking back at the kind of care that you all provided then, and the ending of it when Roe happened then that maybe it was unnecessary, that you continue to provide care in that way outside of the system. I don't know if you have any thoughts on that or lessons for now?

Diane Stevens: Yeah, that's a really interesting question because in a lot of ways, the care we provided was way more compassionate and kinder than the care at the clinics. I wouldn't say all the clinics, though. My friend Eileen, her first job finishing nursing school was working at an abortion clinic. She said one day, one of the women that had an abortion, and she was with them in the recovery room or whatever, she said, "I met you when you were working with that other group!" How can you stand to work here? It was like that for her, for Eileen, that's how she felt. It was just rushing people through and everything. If we could bring the compassion to the institutions. If there wasn't this financial incentive, it would all be better.

because it really puts everything into the political context. The archival footage is totally fantastic. They have footage of the cop that arrested us, who also happened to be at the '68 convention beating people up. So just seeing him on the film is amazing. So anyway, I encourage you to watch it.

Basically, The Janes story is that women, ordinary women, helped other women get abortions. This occurred in the late '60s to early '70s. It started with one woman, who would act as a referral person, people would call her up wanting an abortion, and she would refer them. Gradually, little by little, more and more people were calling her so she needed help doing this. From then it just moved on.

It started with referring women to the abortionists that they knew and then developing relationships with a couple of the abortionists and then being able to set everything up, being able to be with the women when they were having the abortion, counseling before, counseling after, until it was really firmed up with one abortionist whose name was Mike. He revealed to one of the women, Jodie, that he wasn't a doctor. All this time everyone thought he was a doctor. He said he was a doctor, and he was doing a medical procedure. So who would know? Once he said he wasn't a doctor, some of the women in the group were really upset. Well, we had been lying to people all this time saying they were having a doctor do their procedure, and it wasn't true. So they were upset about it. They felt it was wrong. They left the group.

But other women thought, "Hey, wait a minute! You know, he's not a doctor. He's doing abortions. What about us? We could be doing these abortions." So Jody, she's deceased, but she was an amazingly charismatic, strong person, and she was really angry at the whole medical profession because of what she had gone through. She already had two children, she was being treated with cancer, and she was pregnant and trying to get an abortion. She was in the hospital, getting chemo and having to beg for this abortion and finally, ultimately had the abortion in the hospital. It just made her so furious, and she talks about that in the movie. She wanted to one-up these doctors that wouldn't help her.

If anyone listened to the talk earlier today about the Latin American experience, I kept thinking about how different it was because we were really an open secret in the city of Chicago. We had the number on signpost and in the underground newspaper. It was really pretty open about it. The way it went was women would call a phone number. They'd call the Jane number, 643-3844 and leave a message on the phone. Someone would call them back—that was our callback Jane—and get their basic information and transcribe it onto a card. Then they would be called by a counselor. As a counselor, you'd invite the woman to your home and explain everything. From there, they would be given

the address of where to go to have the abortion. Is that enough about how Jane works, basically? Well, people can ask me in the Q&A, all the little details.

My involvement came because I had had an abortion in California. I had what they call the therapeutic abortion. Planned Parenthood guided me through this, and that was fantastic. I will always love Planned Parenthood for helping me with that. I had to see two psychiatrists who would write letters saying that I was mentally incapable of going through a pregnancy, or having a child, or whatever they said, and one gynecologist who heard the same story. The three of them had to write letters to a hospital board who would review it, and they must have done good job with those letters because I was approved. I'm glad too. I was 19 years old. I could barely take care of myself.

I was hospitalized for the abortion. I was given general anesthetic. I was there for two days. I was actually in the psychiatric ward. Although looking back on it, nobody gave me any counseling or offered me any antidepressants or anything. But anyway, I was in the psych ward. Then when I returned to Chicago, I felt that I wanted to do something useful. And I thought, "Well, I had an abortion, I could help women that wanted to have an abortion."

In Chicago, there was an organization called the Chicago Women's Liberation Union. And it was an umbrella organization for many organizations that were working with women. I talked to someone there, and they gave me the Jane phone number. I left my number on the answering machine, and somebody called me up and invited me to a new counselor orientation. Now they asked me maybe two questions. What's your name? Where do you live or something? You know what I mean? They did not really vet me, I'd have to say.

I went to Martha's house and Martha and Judith were there and five or eight other women. It was at that point that I learned that actually, I was trying to join an organization that helped women get illegal abortions. I know! I was clueless. I had no idea what I was getting into. I was very young, and I was very naive. But anyway, I felt that I could do this work. I sat through the orientation, and then I was kind of mentored, although we didn't use that kind of language then, but that's really what it was. With Martha, I sat in with her doing counseling sessions, and then I began doing my own. I had worked. I worked full time, secretarial kind of job. I had dropped out of college a couple times by then, and I would go to our meetings.

We ran kind of as a collective. I know, we tried to run as a collective the best we could, but I know there were people that were really making major decisions. Maybe all groups are like this, I don't know. But I give us all credit for really trying. We had meetings, and they were really worked meetings. They were meetings in which we filled little pill boxes with pills, ergotrate, tetracycline, I think. And we folded pamphlets—which you guys can have if you want

Audience Question: Were there relationships?

Diane Stevens: It was Chicago, you know? I think there's a lot of wiggle room here and there, right. I'll tell you one other thing though. Doing this and being involved with a group of women and doing that... It changed my whole life. It just changed the way I looked at the world. When I worked in Jane, professional was kind of like a bad word. We would never want to be seen as professionals. We saw ourselves with the people, with the woman. We were the same, and there was no distancing. So that's one of the attitudes I think I've carried with me when I became a healthcare provider.

Audience Question: Just curious, did you have a foresight about how quickly Roe v. Wade going the way it did? Or was it something that caught you by surprise as well?

Diane Stevens: You mean back then, or just recently? Oh, just recently? Well, I was living in Maine. So I was there with Susan Collins... I mean, I wasn't with her. I was paying attention when she was saying, "Oh, Brett Kavanaugh, he's really going to be okay. He told me blah, blah, blah." And I knew it was going right then. That's when I knew it was going down.

Audience Question: Do you think there's some foreshadowing into other major impossibly detrimental changes in the healthcare industry at large coming?

Diane Stevens: I hope so. I would like to think so. But I don't know there's so much money, people are getting so much money off everything. It's just so wrong. Just one more way people are being marginalized, not even be able to afford their fucking insulin. I don't know, it's going to have to be huge changes.

Audience Question: Huge changes, let's go.

Diane Stevens: Huge changes like housing, right? You know, I keep meeting younger and younger doctors and health care providers that really do want to change. So maybe it'll come from the health care providers, you know, and they'll just be so fed up with being on this treadmill of seeing more and more patients that that will help the system go down.

Audience Question: Hi. We connected at the bookstore earlier and I had

angle. It was a long needle because imagine have to go in. It was a long needle at an angle, so you could hook it around the cervix and give four injections around the cervix to numb it up a little bit. Sometimes if it seemed like it wasn't stable enough, there was an instrument called a tenaculum that you could use to stabilize the cervix. Then there was dilators, these little dilating rods you could use to slide in, a thinner one, and then a fatter one, and then a fatter one, or there was a mechanical dilator which would slide in. I don't know how to describe a mechanical thing, but you kind of squish it and tighten the screws and gradually open little by little until the cervix was open. All this would be harder for somebody that had never had children, of course, because that cervix had never been dilated, opened up like it does when you have a baby, 10 centimeters.

Anyways, we did D&C's because the vacuum aspirator technology, that got introduced into our group right towards the end, the handheld thing. But it would be forceps removing the material from the uterus, then the Curette, which was a long instrument with a curved kind of thing that you take in and scrape the walls of the uterus. You could feel it, it would be rough, you'd feel it, till it was all clean, all full material, and then then you're done. Remove everything, then you're done. Ideally that would take... how long would that take from beginning to end? Maybe 15 to 30 minutes.

At one talk I gave, somebody wanted to know about pain. Well, we did get the local anesthetic. But beyond that, I was never in a situation where somebody said, "I can't take this, please stop, you've got to stop right now," or started screaming or anything like that. But there would be someone right with her and holding her hand and talk and saying, "Just a little more, looks like we're at least halfway through now. You're doing okay, let's do some breathing." Just that caring kind of thing to help them get through it. I wouldn't say it was comfortable.

When I had an abortion I was under general anesthetic. So I can't say, but I always felt like having a root canal would be worse, but I really hate root canals. So I don't know. Then that menstrual extraction thing in California, it seemed like that was really a lot slower. When I was at a panel with somebody, they were saying that took a couple hours. So we couldn't have spent a couple hours because on a workday would have 20 women or so. Three days a week.

Audience Question: Hi. I was wondering, did y'all struggle finding access to, not just the pharmaceuticals, but also the medical instruments that y'all were using in your practices?

Diane Stevens: Yeah, didn't seem like it. I never heard any talk. I wasn't a person that went and got the stuff, but it never seemed to be an issue.

one—and the cards would go around the room. because all those women that were calling, their information would be on a little index card.

This pile of cards would go around the room. You'd look at these cards, and it'd be like, you'd say, "Okay, I can do two counseling sessions two evenings, this week, maybe I can do like five or six people." You'd pick out the ones that live close to you because you want to make it convenient for people. Then the cards would go around the room again, and then they'd go around again, and you knew they all had to be taken. You knew that these women needed abortions. And you'd look at what their last period was. And it's like, "Oh, my God, this person is like 12 weeks, 13 weeks, somebody eight weeks." You knew you had to get moving. It was that feeling, that urgency that kept us all going.

Really one of the big take homes I like to mention is that I really learned about how important it is to work with all kinds of people. Not everybody was the same. We did not talk about politics at these meetings or any of this little minutiae. We talked about doing the work. Sometimes when I hear people in groups, or this kind of backbiting fighting things in groups, I will think to myself, "These people just don't have enough work to do," [audience laughs] because if you've got all this stuff to do, you can't be picking them out every little nuance.

We were different kinds of people. There were some women that lived in the suburbs (which was fantastic) that'd come into these meetings. They lived in the suburbs. They could see women that lived in the suburbs. There was the crew we called the Hyde Park housewives. The organization started in this part of Chicago called Hyde Park, and they were married women, some had children, and they were in a situation where they didn't have to work. They were the ones that was taking care of the kids. Then there was me and my best friends who were kind of the hippie girls, who were willing to live in pretty austere situations. It was so much different in the '70s. You weren't really thinking about having a good microwave. Well, you know, microwaves hadn't even been invented. But it was really different. We thought we were changing the world. We thought the whole world was changing. We had that '60s mentality.

So, I learned how to be a counselor, and then I learned how to be at what we called "the front," which was the address the woman would be given. It would be somebody's apartment, either a friend that we somehow conned into letting us use their house or our own apartments that we thought was going to be safe, that you can have people coming and going all day long without anyone calling the police. It was like a big waiting room because women could bring their support people, some of them had to bring their kids. We would try to create a pleasant atmosphere.

We would do a lot of education. We had the books we used: Our Bod-

ies, Ourselves. Then there were a couple books out of out of Montreal, The Birth Control Handbook and The VD Handbook, which we had printed someplace. We would give those out and would try to make whatever connections we could: We are women helping women, this is what we have to do to improve all of our lives. So that would be when I worked at the front.

As I had been in the group longer, there was a need to have more people assisting with the actual procedures. By the time I joined the group... I never met Mike. I never met the abortionist, and if you see the movie, he will really crack you up. He's quite a character. I started while he was the abortionist, and then it switched over, but I never saw him doing abortions. I started helping when Jodie was doing them and then a few other people. We would teach people very gradually, like first you would help the woman, walk her into the room and give her the injection and sit with her during the abortion. And then you'd kind of move on doing piece by piece.

We did D&Cs. That's what the technology was at that time. Of course, there were no ultrasounds. None of us had training to do bimanual pelvic exams or whatever, but we just did what needed to be done and we did a good job because we had a low rate of problems afterwards. We kept in really close touch with the women. She'd have her counselor to call her afterwards and check on her. If she had anything that didn't seem right going on, she would be told you have to go to the hospital. We can't help them with this, if they're bleeding too heavily or have an infection or whatever.

So, life went on until there was an arrest. A woman whose family disapproved of her having the abortion went to the police and said, "We want you to stop this." They finally felt that they... They didn't really want to. These guys were like, "Well, we're the homicide cops. What do we care about abortion?" But they ultimately did come into the workplace and to the front, and seven of us were arrested.

I spent one night in jail. I have to say, again, I was so young and naive. Well, it wasn't really the best night in my life. but I got through it. And I thought if I had to go to jail because of this, I was really a good person to go to jail because I didn't have children. I didn't have strong family obligations or anything. If I had to go to jail, so be it. But I was fortunate. I didn't have to go to jail. Roe v... The court processes were going on. We would go to court and then it would be continued or more motions. There'd be more motions. So it just kind of went on that way for a while.

For a while, right after the bust, those of us who had been arrested stop working with the group because of the heightened paranoia. We thought we were being followed and whatnot. But ultimately, some of us did go back and start working doing abortions again, which I did. Then ultimately, Roe v. Wade

Like, what kinds of things would you tell them? What advice would you give? What would you do differently?

Diane Stevens: Oh, that's a good question. I don't know. I don't know what we could have done differently. I wish we had better access to telephones. Telephones were so crazy back then. What, with looking for pay phones, and then somebody's husband was the night manager at a print shop. And we would go there and use phones at his place. Then I think how things are now. There're phones everywhere now, but then there's always also the paranoia of all the phones too, so... I don't know how we could have done it differently. I'll think about that and the next time I give a talk, I'll have an answer on that one.

But you were mentioning about women helping women and stuff. When I was at a conference in Durham, I met this woman whose name is Angela Hume, and she wrote a book called Deep Care that isn't out yet, but she sent me a copy. It's about the women in California that did the self-help clinics and the menstrual extractions and everything. This is like totally fascinating. So, her name is Angela Hume, and her book will be coming along. Angela's like a serious historian, a feminist historian. I just started reading the book. It's fantastic. There's just a lot of stuff that we don't know that was going on.

Audience Question: Hi, thank you. I wanted to ask if you wanted to maybe explain a little bit more about what a D&C process of abortion is. So, people understand what the experience was of people who were experiencing those abortions. And also, what do you think about this clinicalized process that was being performed in a non-clinical space? People who are interested in helping other people by performing that sort of care in non-medicalized spaces, what is the responsible way to do that?

Diane Stevens: Oh, like, what would I think about people during the process that I used to do now?

Audience Question: Or any other processes?

Diane Stevens: Well, I think you can learn so much about sterile technique and stuff. I remember people were kind of appalled. The people from California came and visited Jane, and they were kind of appalled with our processes, which was basically field sterilization, cold water sterilizing. Basically, what a D&C involves is a speculum goes into the vagina, and it gets opened up to reveal the cervix (All I can say is how we used to do it), and then we would use a local anesthetic Xylocaine, just like you get with dental work. The needle was at an

houses. There was one in Chicago, and however many days it was open, maybe six days a week, it was for men. One day a week, women had the place, and it was fantastic. It was steaming rooms, different kinds of steam rooms and a pool and massages and stuff. So sometimes we did that.

We had our friendships, which was so important. They're my dearest friends to this day. We would go out for pastries a lot. [audience laughs] So there is a really good pastry place to replace at a hotel, the Belmont hotel, and they gave you a little gold service and these Napoleon's and stuff like that. We would do fun things like that. I don't know, it was stressful, but it was okay. We had each other.

Audience Question: Hi. First, I'd like to thank you for what you did. I did my training with the Cicada Collective in Austin, and I wondered if you had any words of hope concerning the laws that are being passed.

Diane Stevens: Yes, I do! Look at Ohio. I mean, that just look at Ohio, jeez, and Michigan. There's a lot of good stuff going on. Just hearing this morning, or this afternoon, I'm sorry, listening to the talk from Latin America, that was fantastic. We have so much to learn. So, like all of you, I am really disheartened a lot of times, but I think there's a lot of good things going on. Just the fact that all of you are here. That gives me hope really. That gives me hope. I think things are going to turn around. I don't think people are going to take this. It's just too awful. Every day we hear more horrible things about the Supreme Court. People are not going to take it.

Women are not going to take it. They're going to stand up, and the laws will change. Until the laws change... I'm not part of the world that's doing anything illegal right now. I know. It's true. It's sad to say, but it's true. But I know there's a lot of things going on out there, and I support you, whoever you are, 100%.

Audience Question: Hey, thanks for being here. I know everyone's already said it, but I think we can't express enough gratitude. I also want to say it's really sick as a woman to hear women's history, the story of women helping women, just normal women helping other women. I'm really happy that you're sharing this with us because it means a lot to hear those histories. My question is: In all the experience that y'all had along the way, I'm sure there were a lot of things that y'all had to figure out and kind of figured out as you're going along, I'm wondering what you would do if you had magic powers and could go back in time, and share your wisdom with the women who are doing that work, then.

occurred, and we went to court and our charges were all dismissed. In fact, my record was even expunged. So it really didn't have any lasting bad effects on me or anything.

When all was said and done, we estimate... The most recent addition of Laura's book (Laura was in the group, and she wrote a book, and it's available in all the bookstores), she estimates 11,000 abortions were done over the years. So really a lot. [audience applause] Story of Jane. [The name of Laura Kaplan's book]

Well, I thought I'd just mentioned a couple of little things that I think are interesting, and then I'll open it up for questions. One thing is we paid ourselves. We paid ourselves, and that all started with Mike. He would pay his assistant. He'd pay them like \$75 a day. So we continued that system: \$50 for work in the front, and I think it was \$75 for doing the assisting with the abortions or doing them. Then the people that spent all their life on the telephone, the callbacks, they got paid some kind of weekly salary. So we did pay ourselves. That's important because that enabled us to keep doing it. I already said this about ordinary people. We were really very ordinary. Nobody had any medical training. We were just people that rose to the occasion.

I wanted to mention this thing about the responsibility you take that you might cause harm. Because if you're a doctor, or even if you're some other kind of medical provider, and you make a mistake, —you do the surgery wrong, or you give somebody the wrong medications or whatever—it's bad, but you've got a whole system that supports you. I don't mean just like your malpractice insurance; you've got the whole culture supports you. But if you're doing something illegal, and you do something wrong. You have nothing. You have each other. You have nothing out in society, but you have each other. So that's just something that you've got to think about that I think is a good takeaway.

I was going to say this thing about doing illegal stuff, [audience laughs] which... Well, yeah, cause you're all laughing. So it's cool to do illegal stuff, right? [audience cheers] And that's why you guys all came to see me and clap for me. You think anybody does that in my day-to-day life? But if you're in a group, and you end up with people that are overly enamored of doing illegal things, or they really are high risk taker kind of people, those people can be dangerous. It's just like another responsibility you have to take when you're working outside the establishment, is to kind of be looking at each other a critical eye. There was a person that we asked to leave the group because we thought she was fucking up, and she was too much enamored of the stuff, and maybe her medical practices weren't as good as they should have been. So anyway, we asked her to leave the group. So that's just something about taking responsibility and kind of looking at who your peers are. I thought I'd mentioned that. Let's see what else do I

want to mention?

I think those were my key points I wanted to mention. So why don't you guys ask me any questions you want?

Audience Question: Thank you for being here. I'm part of the Mountain Area Abortion Doula Collective here. I have so many fucking questions for you, but one of them is: How did y'all decide what to pay each other? We have a hard time quantifying an 18-hour signal conversation, or a handhold and a back rub, and a counter pressure, like how did you decide this gets to be paid this much? And this gets to be paid that much?

Diane Stevens: That's a good question. I think it was all based on what Mike started. So that's kind of awful, really, but that's how we started. I guess I would say that if that's their full-time job, and they're doing so much work that they couldn't do anything else, then you've got to pay them a living wage for whatever it has to be, right? I mean, if you have to be on call for people, because they might need you at any given moment, then you can't really have another job, right? It's going to be tricky. How you're going to leave? "Sorry, I've got to go blah, blah." Most jobs don't like that sort of thing. So, I don't know. I guess you'd have to talk about what's a living wage. Back then it was so little. It was so little, right?

Audience Question: Thank you very much for your talk today. Did your work with the Jane collective make you interested in getting involved in nursing?

Diane Stevens: Yeah, I wanted to help people think. In fact, I always thought I'd do women's health, but I ended up working in psychiatry more than anything. There are a lot of women in the psych hospital, right? That's for sure. Right. It's all the same.

I was going to say one thing about money. One thing that was really great when the women's started doing the abortions instead of Mike is that we cut the price. Because when we had him it was \$300 and then would kind of negotiate to do a few for free. Then after we did them, it was \$100 if you can pay it. So that was great. Like \$300, and then we went to \$100. We had a lot of money. I mean, we're paying each other, and then when we got arrested, it turned out we all had money in our freezers that we could use to bail me out, basically. Right, so it was useful.

Audience Question: Hi, thank you so much for being here. I'm also a

member of MAADCO. Ya'll should come to our workshop that me and Ash are doing. I really appreciate you being here, and I'm curious. I think right now, we're doing this work in a landscape where forced birth rhetoric, and the pressure for folks to have children is so intense, especially in our particular context. We're supporting a lot of people who live in rural Christian communities and who live in the Southeast, and I guess what I'm curious about is how did y'all approach supporting people who were struggling with even the choice of whether or not to have an abortion and moving through that choice?

Diane Stevens: Yeah. I don't think we really had to struggle with that a whole lot because by the time people were calling the phone number, they had pretty much decided this is what they wanted to do. I'll tell you one of the worst situations I was ever in, though, was it was at a front, and it was a teenager that was pregnant, and she was there with her mother, and it was a young teenager. She wasn't an 18-year-old, she was probably like 15, maybe. I would meet so many women that were trying to keep an eye on their daughters, and they would tell me about always watching the menstrual pads, if they were being used up or not. So anyways, this woman had brought her daughter for her abortion, and the daughter did not want to have it. So, I talked to the daughter separately, and she said, "No way. I don't want to do this."

So, I had to tell the mother, I said, "You know, we can't do it against her will. Even if we wanted to how would we make her stay still?" We could not do that. She has to be a willing participant. But I just felt horrible for both of them. I could see this woman who has been raising her kids, and now who's going to be taking care of the baby, right? I just felt bad for them. So that was that was awful.

Beyond that, like I said, by the time I was meeting them, they really, I never saw anybody go into the room for the abortion say, "Oh, I changed my mind." I never saw anything like that. I'm sorry if that didn't really answer the question very well.

Audience Question: Hi, I was wondering how you all would cope individually and as a group with the inevitable burnout that would occur with such an overload of physical and emotional work?

Diane Stevens: Well, we have a lot of things we did for ourselves. In Chicago, one thing we did, which I had forgotten about until Eileen mentioned recently, was there was a place called the Luxor baths, which was an old-time bath house like they had, like the European Communities used to really be into these bath